Berlin Mountain Area
Recreation Plan

Will Keating, Shauna Sullivan, Drew West
Location
Greater Berkshire Trail Network

Taconic Crest Trail

BNRC High Road
● 10 hiking trails
● Over 2,000 acres
Current Activities

- 10 Hiking Trails
- Mountain Biking along the TCT
- Seasonal Hunting
- Backcountry Skiing
- Illegal Motorized Use
Client Vision – WRLF and Williamstown

- Create an outdoor passive recreation hub for residents and tourists
  - Develop trails that suit user-groups’ needs
  - Improve and maintain current trail network
  - Create infrastructure for safe recreation
  - Legitimize access points
  - Provide historical context
Obstacles

- Disparate ownership
- Geography
  - Slope
  - Wetness
- Accessibility
- Standardization
Opportunity

- Large area
- Undeveloped
- Varied terrain
  - Slope map
  - Viewsheds
- Recreation-friendly owners
  - Leadership of WRLF
- Proximity
  - 5 miles from Williamstown center
Project Goals

● WRLF Guidance
  ○ Owner & stakeholder interviews
  ○ Data gathering
    ■ GPS & GIS
  ○ Cost analysis

● Deliverables
  ○ Report with recommendations
  ○ Updated, organized GIS files
  ○ Maps
Research Findings

- Interviews
- Site Visits
- Trails
  - Hiking
  - Biking
  - Skiing
  - Motorized vehicles
  - Maintenance
- Camping
  - Privy
- Access
  - Location
  - Trails
  - Parking
  - Safety
Interviews

- Andrew Groff – Williamstown Town Planner
- Tim Kaiser – Director, Williamstown Dept. of Public Works, Landowner
- Scott Lewis – Director, Williams Outing Club
- David Ackerson – Assistant Director, Williams Outing Club
- Rebecca Barnes – Trail Supervisor, Mass. Dept. of Conservation & Recreation
- Dan Gura – Trail Developer, WRLF
- David Pomerantz – Mountain Bike Trail Builder
- Ed Carman – Local Resident
- Bob Hatton – Local Trail Maintenance Volunteer
- Karen Ross – Taconic Hiking Club
- Mackenzie Greer – Conservation and Stewardship Associate, BNRC
- Henry Art – Director, Williams College Center for Environmental Studies
- David Dethier – Professor, Dept. of Geosciences
- Drew Jones – Manager, Hopkins Memorial Forest
- Bob McCarthy – Williamstown Forest Warden
- Jock Brooks – WRLF Trail Committee
- Dick Schlesinger – WRLF Trail Committee
- Eric White – WRLF Trail Committee
- Cosmo Catalano – WRLF Trail Committee
- John Mace – WRLF Hike Leader
- Jason Hoch – Town Manager, Williamstown
## Evaluation Matrix

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Raw Total: 20 | 11 | 19 | 19 | 17 | -16

- **1** - support
- **0** - ambivalence
- **-1** - opposition

Valuable for general themes, but lacks detail for specific proposals.
Site Visits

- **October 20**
  - Traced the parking lot with GPS
  - Collected waypoints for GIS
  - Spoke with a local skier and hang-glider

- **November 11**
  - Hiked the WRLF Loop Trail, Class of ‘33 Trail, and Bullock Trail
  - Marked a proposed camping site and spots for trail maintenance
  - Examined drainage infrastructure

- **November 16**
  - Hiked Sara Tenney Trail, Taconic Crest Trail, proposed Ridge Trail, Turnpike Trail back to the Sara Tenney Trailhead off Rt. 2
  - Investigated viewshed upon Dodd’s Cone
  - Explored old logging roads to connect existing trails
Looking for Consensus among Stakeholders

- Passive recreation
  - Hiking
  - Mountain Biking
  - Skiing
- Camping
- Motorized recreation
- Accessibility
Landowners

- **Organization/Public**
  - Williamstown Rural Lands Foundation
    - Conservation and recreation
  - Berkshire Natural Resources Council
    - Conservation and recreation
  - Williams College
    - Mild recreational interest
  - Williamstown
    - Conservation and recreation
    - Conservation
  - New York Dept. of Environmental Cons.
    - Unable to contact

- **Private**
  - Dan Holland
    - Did not contact
  - Tim Kaiser
    - Accepting of recreation, pro motorized vehicle use
  - Jean Wimpenny
    - Did not contact
Williams College

- Owns the land at the end of Berlin Road where the main parking lot is
  - Entire Berlin Pass Trail
- WOC contributes to trail maintenance on the ‘33, Loop Trail
- No active management of the parking lot, road
- Concern over increased maintenance burden with new trails
- Desire for campsite for WOC
- No focused on biking
Williamstown

- No maintenance contribution
- Would like WRLF to manage the area
  - More flexibility in a private organization
- Desire to increase recreation options for citizens and tourists
  - Open to camping, biking, hiking, skiing, concern over management of motorized vehicles
Massachusetts DCR

- Satellite of Greylock Reservation
- No active staff or monitoring
- Primarily focused on conservation
  - Would only consider additional trails or camping if there were a demonstrated need
  - Concerned about increased maintenance burden
  - Reserve is designated for wildlife
Log Lunch Questionnaire

Which of the following activities (if any) would you be excited to pursue at the Berlin Mtn. Recreation Area? (check all that apply)

- Hiking: 63 (55.5%)
- Mountain Biking: 14 (12.2%)
- Nordic Skiing: 32 (28.5%)
- Camping: 32 (28.5%)
- Hunting: 0 (0%)
- Backcountry Skiing: 19 (16.7%)
- Foraging: 1 (1.3%)
- Snowshoeing: 1 (1.3%)

Which issues do you think might prevent you from pursuing these activities? (check all that apply)

- I don't know where to go: 28 (24.4%)
- I don't want to pay: 17 (14.8%)
- I don't want to lose cell service: 18 (15.5%)
- I worry I'll get lost on the trails: 24 (20.6%)
- I'm too busy: 28 (24.4%)
- I prefer indoor activities: 1 (1.3%)
- I've never thought about going there: 1 (1.3%)
- ATV's: 1 (1.3%)
- Motorized Vehicles: 1 (1.3%)
- Other Outdoor Gear: 1 (1.3%)

I am a...
69 responses

Have you been to this area?
69 responses

- Yes: 32 (43.5%)
- No: 25 (33.3%)
- I don't know where to go: 10 (13.1%)
- I don't want to pay: 5 (6.5%)
- I don't want to lose cell service: 5 (6.5%)
- I worry I'll get lost on the trails: 8 (10.3%)
- I'm too busy: 10 (13.1%)
- I prefer indoor activities: 1 (1.3%)
- I've never thought about going there: 1 (1.3%)
- ATV's: 1 (1.3%)
- Motorized Vehicles: 1 (1.3%)
- Other Outdoor Gear: 1 (1.3%)
Hiking

● “No New Trails”
  ○ More trails & activities = higher maintenance burden
  ○ A surplus of trails makes for confusing navigation

VS.

● Improving the Trail System
  ○ Key linkages
  ○ New hiking loops
  ○ Easy access from parking lot
Maintenance

- Many trails need better drainage to prevent erosion and encourage use.

- Existing infrastructure needs fixing.
  - Waterbars and check-steps
  - Bog bridges
  - Reroute around wet/erode areas

Broken bog bridge on the Bullock Trail
Hiking Trails

- Simplify and unify trail system
  - 2 proposed trail linkages
- Increase signage and provide more information
- Organize maps around parking lot and central kiosk
Proposed New Trails
Locating Proposed Trail Linkages

Ridge Trail
Access to Turnpike Trail
Reviving A Sense of Place

“As people increasingly enclose themselves in their houses, factories, offices, classrooms, cars and TV rooms, precise names disappear and are replaced by generalizations like ‘East,’ ‘Berlin,’ ‘Petersburg,’ and ‘South.’” - Williamstown Historical Commission
Dodd’s Cone: A Delightful View

- Trail Proposal leads up to the Taconic Crest Trail
- Affords a great view during winter when there’s no foliage
- Cut a few trees to make year round vista attop Dodd’s Cone
Mountain Biking

“A number of years ago, the Berkshire NEMBA* chapter had close to 200 members, today it has 45.” – Alison McGee, Berkshire NEMBA Rep

* New England Mountain Bike Association

“Mountain biking trails are a gateway to… I believe these things are called dirt bikes. Those cause erosion and tear up hiking trails, especially if they’re wet.” – Hank Art, Williams College Professor
Biking Trails

- Limited mountain biking options in the Northern Berkshires
  - Greylock Glen
  - Pittsfield State Forest
- Supported by >50% of interviewees
- Mountain biking feasibility concerns
  - Slope
  - Wetness
- Management
  - No cross-use
  - NEMBA membership
Biking Trails

Logging Roads

Trail Armouring
Biking Trails

● One Year
  ○ Better understand feasibility
  ○ Walk area with trail builders, focus on established logging roads
    ■ Use the New England Mountain Bike Assoc. as a resource

● Two Year
  ○ If drainage and slope are suitable, create a loop trail to generate a mountain bike presence
    ■ Take advantage of the logging roads near the parking lot
“Some skiers are going to tell you, they don’t want this area to be more accessible, they’re concerned it’ll ruin their private snow stash.”

– Ed Carman, Resident

“Our plow trucks can’t turn around once the skiers park in the ‘33 parking lot, so they have to back down the road, and sometimes that means they end up in a ditch.”

– Tim Kaiser, Director of the DPW
Ski Trails

- Former Williams College Ski Area
- Maintained informally by Thunderbolt Ski Runners
  - Added glades
  - Hand trim
  - Overgrowth
- Benefits to limited wintertime access
  - Half-mile walk to trailhead
  - Fresh snow
  - Competition with snowmobiles
Motorized Usage

Large, deep tracks left by motorized vehicles obstruct the proper drainage mechanisms and quicken erosion.

Prevent This:

Using These:

- Barriers
- Prohibiting Signs
- Increased Foot Traffic
Camping

- Good location just off of Class of ‘33 Trail on Bullock (Town) Lot
  - 30 min hike
  - Even ground
  - Proximity to water
  - Hemlock Grove
Camping

- Location options
  - Another possibility off Bullock Trail, West of ski slope.
- Concerns: interest, impact, cost
- 3 Options:
  - Tenting on even ground
  - Tenting on a raised platform
  - Lean-to

Material Costs

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Other cost estimates include:

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Total: $5,557
Possible Funding Sources

- **Community Preservation Act**
  - Fund from town property tax surcharge, governed by committee with the town manager. Must fund projects in three areas: historic preservation, open space and recreation, and affordable housing. **January Application Deadline!**

- **MassTrails Grant**
  - Grant for the creation and maintenance of trail networks used and enjoyed by Massachusetts residents and visitors. **February Application Deadline!**
  - 20% matching (no lookback), minimum $10,000

- **State Mountain Bike Funding**
  - $800,000 for trail mapping and development in Berkshire, Hampshire, Franklin, and Hampden Counties

- **Bullock Trust**
  - Private Trust for the creation of a wooded park on the Bullock Lot
Bullock Lot Boundary Confirmation

Campsite to be located in the Bullock Lot, eligible for funding from Bullock Trust
Access: Getting There

- **Difficult navigation**
  - No signage along Rt. 7 or Bee Hill

- **Ghost destination**
  - No sign at the parking lot
  - No public trail map
  - No kiosk with information
  - Feels abandoned
Location

- Location signage
  - Rt. 7 promotion
  - Slow driving signs
  - Central kiosk
  - Trailhead markers
  - Highlight historical and natural context
  - Motorized vehicle posting
Trail Access

- Flooded entrances
- Minimal signage
- Vandalism
Trail Access

- Trail signage
  - Difficulty
  - Mileage
  - End point
  - Junctions

- Consistency
  - Across trails
  - With trail map
  - For blaze colors
Parking

- Flooded and potholed
- Minimal parking space
  - Shrub encroachment
  - No marked spots
- Main lot is unplowed during winter
  - Skiers park at ‘33 pull-off
  - Synchronize with town plows
Parking

● One Year
  ○ Town access to main lot
    ■ Space for plow turnaround, improved access
    ■ Owned by the College
    ■ Dialogue between the Town and College
  ○ Brush clearing, dirt/gravel fill
  ○ Welcome sign

● Two Year
  ○ Grading and shaping

● Long Term
  ○ Drainage installation
Safety

- Vehicle traffic
  - Narrow road
  - No posted speed limit
  - Residences are close to the street

- Rescue options
  - No cell service
  - No ranger patrol
  - Lost hikers end up at residents’ houses
Safety

- **One Year**
  - Slow driving and speed limit signs
  - Trail map
    - Distance
    - Difficulty rating
  - Trail signage
    - Signs to the parking lot
    - Distance
    - Consistency with the map
  - Log book

- **Long Term**
  - Cell booster for parking lot
Alternatives - Do Nothing

**Pros**
- No expenditure
- Time to consider other alternatives

**Cons**
- Costs of inaction
  - Site condition worsens
    - Parking lot damages visitors’ cars
    - Trails erode
    - Visitors may get lost
- Opportunity cost
  - Chance to promote recreation and tourism
  - Loss of focus and energy for this project
Recommendation Timeline: One Year

- **Signage**
  - Route 7
  - Central kiosk
  - Trail directions
  - Motorized vehicle posting

- **Parking lot**
  - Dialogue with town
  - Clear brush and add fill
  - Parking signs and fencing

- **Biking trails**: Walkthrough with NEMBA, survey for feasibility
- **Campsite**: Level ground, install privy, fire pit
- **General trail maintenance**
Recommendation Timeline: Two Years

- Biking trails: begin development
- Hiking trail linkages: clearing and marking
- Organize community events
- Continue more extensive projects (upgrade campsite, parking lot improvement)
Long-Term Recommendations

- Invite volunteer participation through Adopt-A-Trail
- Nordic skiing loop
- Mountain biking trail to summit
Questions?

Contact Us:

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Shauna Sullivan   sjs8@williams.edu